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bad way, the elders of the allied families are expected to intervene. Scandals or dishonourable behaviour in one unit are likely to spoil the name of all the allied families, and as such tradition enjoins elders to advise, warn and even admonish the erring members. A young man given to excessive drinking, gambling or any similar vice would often be admonished by the elders of this extended family. If he cannot keep his wife under control, or if the quarrels of the two become very frequent and too public, the neighbours would convey the information to the elders of the extended family and expect them to use their initiative in putting things right. In all such cases they will be within their customary rights if they intervene. They can demand that their advice is heard and followed.

Within the family unit the eldest male is generally regarded as the head. His wife or the next senior male is given the second place. A respectful son very often describes his old widowed mother as the 'head' of the family. However, in many cases the *de facto* head of the family may be a son under whose guidance and supervision the land is cultivated or the craft or profession of the family is practised. Parents dominate the scene in their youth and early middle age. With approaching old age they gradually recede to the background. Nominally they remain the heads of the family, but their sons are left more or less free to conduct the management of the family property and profession as they like. As long as the father remains the real head of the family, the internal management of the family remains the charge of the mother. Sons are expected to obey her and the daughters-in-law are expected to carry out her instructions. Any failure or reluctance on the part of a daughter-in-law to carry out the wishes of her mother-in-law leads to constant quarrels and complications, and in many cases to ultimate separation. Between sons and daughters, as a rule, preference is shown to the former, but if the sisters have considerable seniority in age, their younger brothers are expected to respect and obey them.

In the village community of Shamirpet, which has considerable variations of caste and class, and significant differences in education and urban contacts, it is only natural to expect great variations in the family ideals and ethics of the different groups. In the themes of their idealizations, the different sections of the population show striking similarities; but in their attitudes and reactions

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593 husband by touching his feet. She washes the husband's clothes,
562 and eats the leavings in his plate. The husband cannot do likewise. When the wife errs, the husband reprimands her, and can abuse and beat her. However, a good wife is not expected to answer him back. Even when the husband is wrong she is supposed to bear her lot meekly and submissively. This cultural pattern is reflected in the lament of the wife over her husband's demise, when she wails, 'Where is my lord? Where is my master? Now who will support me? The shield that protected me is gone; now I am helpless.'

This, then, is the 'ideal'. Almost everyone in the village would verbalize the expected husband-wife relationship in similar words. But the reality appears to be very different; and a close study of the actual family records would reveal that these ideals are more or less a social fiction. The husband is, without doubt, superior, and has, in most families, the upper hand; but practically nowhere do we find him a completely dominant, authoritarian and patriarchal figure. Moreover, the quality of inter-personal relations between husband and wife change as they leave one stage of life and enter another.

585 It has been pointed out earlier that married life is started by a
593 couple under the parental roof. During this stage, at least for the first few months, they are not supposed to show any special con-
[591] cern for each other. The man continues to work under the direction of his father or elder brother; the woman carries out the instructions of her mother-in-law. There is hardly any opportunity for them to meet and talk during the day, and when they do meet under the cover of darkness, possibly in a separate room, the proximity of the parents' room does not allow them the liberty of engaging in audible love-play or even of talking freely. Of necessity they have to speak in whispers. The cultural pattern demands that the wife must resist the initial advances of her husband for several nights. She often feigns complete ignorance regarding sexual matters and displays horror and disgust when the husband approaches her. After two or three weeks the wife becomes more co-operative. Now sex dominates their life for the several months that follow. There is casual conversation between the two, but in
593 these first months household affairs are invariably not discussed
606 by them. The husband generally speaks to her about the village affairs and his kinsfolk. He also tells her his experiences of the city.

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The girl talks to him about her childhood friends in the village and about her relations. At this stage, even if she is troubled by her mother-in-law, she would not complain to her husband about her discomforts and difficulties at home. The stereotype norms that a girl unconsciously picks up from conversation between elderly women, or consciously learns as a result of direct instruction by her mother are: 'Unless the husband is completely under your influence, do not try to take him away from his mother. When your grip over him is firm, you can persuade him to do what you like. But any premature efforts on your part will only generate distrust about you in his heart.' Thus, she begins complaining to her husband about the bad treatment that she receives from her mother-in-law and the other women relations when she is sure that the relative strength of her influence over him is greater than theirs. The husband finds himself in a dilemma. He knows that a man who 'listens too much to his wife' is an object of social scorn and ridicule. Thus if he starts taking sides with his wife, the comment of the elders would generally be against him, and even the people of his own age-group would circulate funny, but often quite imaginary, stories about his submissiveness to his wife. On the other hand, he realizes that nearly everyone at some stage has to take sides, and that even his critics have had to do so, at some point in their lives. His position becomes really difficult when he is subjected to pressure simultaneously from two directions: when the mother complains about his wife and the wife complains about his mother. To begin with, most sons ignore these complaints and accusations, and refuse to take sides. In the next stage they side with, or at least pretend to side with, the mother. For the satisfaction of the mother the son would scold the wife once or twice. If the wife takes it ill, she would refuse to speak with him when they meet in the night. The husband has then to make some efforts to console her. Often he says to her that he did not intend any of his remarks to be taken seriously. Or he may even say that the mock-scolding was meant only to satisfy the old mother. The wife takes this opportunity to narrate more accounts of sufferings that she has to undergo in the house, on account of the troublesome mother-in-law and the other deceitful female relatives. In a joint family this continues, but in a great majority of cases after some years the husband and wife secede from the main family to set up an independent household of their own.

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of running away to her parental home. She often expresses her anger and discontent by neglecting the children and other household activities. If things still do not improve to her satisfaction, she begins to protest loudly, which often ends in open quarrels and altercations. On the other hand, among the men the stereotype that by nature woman is faithless is widely believed, and while they admit that there are some notable exceptions, they nevertheless emphasize the necessity of vigilance on the part of the husband and other responsible members of the family. The suspicion regarding a woman is directed particularly against two things: namely, possibility of a sexual liaison with a 'lover', and that of her stealthily giving money and grain to her relatives on the paternal side. If he suspects his wife, the husband makes suggestive hints and veiled threats. When subsequent events confirm his suspicion, he voices his protests loudly. Now he administers threats of dire consequences, and as a foretaste of what would come if she does not change her ways, he may even beat his wife. If things do not change for the better even with this, the subsequent developments may indeed be very complicated. However, much depends on the personality and disposition of the husband. Rather than allowing the affair to develop into an open scandal, some husbands overlook occasional lapses of their wives; others are so jealous that they cannot forget an incident of this type even when the wives mend their ways and keep on taunting them.

In a joint family, the daughter-in-law does not have any independence unless she becomes the mother of two or three children. Until then she should not be found even speaking to her husband. Efforts at endearment, smiling or even exchanging fond glances would be enough to cause comment and would earn for the couple a reputation for being 'shameless'. The husband in such families often hears the complaints from both his mother and his wife, and leaves them to adjust their relations among themselves.

In the preceding section I have discussed the ethics and ideals of family organization on the three levels of village population. The authoritarian husband and the docile wife is the ideal of people on all three levels, but it is only on the upper level that we find them holding to the ideal in actual practice. Even there, the desire to maintain 'family prestige' and 'good name' forces the husband to overlook some of the faults and failings of the wife and

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sons and their wives are enjoined by tradition to forget all disputes and dissensions and 'give as much comfort to the old people in their last days' as they possibly can.

THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

The daughter-in-law, coming from a different family and often from a different village, finds herself in totally new surroundings in her husband's home. Now she enters the new phase of life about which she has heard so much since the beginning of her later childhood. She has now to encounter the mother-in-law for whom she has an unmistakable dread. She expects her to be wicked, cruel and heartless. She has learnt to regard her husband's sisters as cunning and deceitful, and the wives of his elder brothers as troublesome and scheming. She expects love and friendship from the husband, but has to bear in mind the oft-repeated dictum of the village women that 'all men are uncertain' and that 'they cannot be depended upon'. She expects sympathy and friendship from her husband's younger brothers and his younger sisters—from the latter only if they are not grown up and if they are not almost of her own age. With the exception of these she has either to respect or to avoid most other members of the family. She comes to her new home with considerable diffidence and fear. She knows that here all her acts will be closely watched and criticized, and she has been taught to believe that however well she may act, it will not be easy for her to please her new relations-in-law. She leaves her parental home with a sorrowful heart, and enters that of her husband full of misgivings and uncertainty.

Notwithstanding the mental picture that she has had, she finds the reception given to her quite cordial. In most homes an effort is made to create a 'good impression' on her. At least for a few weeks she has some novelty about her, and is therefore cared for and looked after very well. The mother-in-law and sisters-in-law do not spare her a critical eye, but their comments are invariably made when the bride is not within hearing distance. But this phase lasts only a few weeks, or at the most, two or three months. Later she must be initiated into the ways and traditions of the household and should be taught 'how to do things properly'. Each house has some peculiarities that are distinctly its own, and in order to adjust successfully into its pattern it is necessary for the bride to know and respect these. She must learn her own part in the domestic

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606 work, and do it to the satisfaction of the hypercritical female
607 relations. If she wants to make an impression, she must relieve the mother-in-law and other elderly and important women in the house of a part of their work by undertaking to do it herself. A mother-in-law is bound to be pleased with her if she offers to massage her feet at night. 'Good mothers' often train their daughters to take recourse to these methods for making an initial good impression on the hard-to-please mother-in-law. However, in some cases a different pattern seems to be followed. Some mothers say to their daughters, 'The more submissive you are the more your mother-in-law will make you work hard. If by mistake you do her part of the work on one day, you will find that it will become a regular part of your duty from the next day. The best way is to avoid all work which is normally to be done by someone else.' This view too is not without some truth.

606 Gradually the enthusiasm for the bride cools off as she does not
607 remain 'new' for a very long time. She is expected to pass the rest
578 of her life in this house, and as such it is necessary for her to adapt herself to its ways. Her steps are watched; her contribution to the work of the household is critically evaluated, and comments are freely made to appraise her of the views of others regarding the quality and quantity of her work. The mother-in-law and the sisters-in-law keenly observe her talk and behaviour. Does she praise her parents and their home very much? If she does, the mother-in-law or one of the sisters-in-law will unearth some scandal about them. If she praises the fields belonging to her father, or even happens to mention the good food which she ate at home, her remarks would be noticed, and in return she would be taunted, either immediately, or at a suitable occasion later. Thus if she is tactless enough to say, 'I remember the rice in our house which had such a delicate flavour', in reply she would hear something like this: 'Yes, we know. In your parental house they served you platefuls of pearls and diamonds in place of rice; in this house you get only a handful of broken rice and paddy straw.' A casual remark from the daughter-in-law about her feeling tired, may be taken to mean that she is complaining about the hard work which she is made to do. The mother-in-law would retort, 'Yes, my flower, I know you are delicate. Why? In your parents' home you had dozens of servants and you did not have to move so much as a grain of rice, and here you work from dawn to midnight. They

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ought to have married you to a prince. Why did you come to a house as poor as this?' And so it goes on. The mother-in-law and her daughters, married or unmarried, form one clique. The daughters-in-law of necessity form another, but they are divided among themselves, and have rivalry, jealousy and suspicion for one another. The pattern of inter-personal relations emerging from it is very complicated. There is always considerable back-biting and telling of tales. Alliances are formed and broken periodically. A daughter-in-law working diligently to find some favour with the mother-in-law is envied by the other daughters-in-law, who never fail to find fault with her, and always manipulate things to place the blame for anything going wrong squarely on her. In a simple and casual utterance, very often, some hidden meaning is read: on the other hand, explosive remarks are couched in simple words and very innocently made. The intrigues and jealousies among the womenfolk in a joint family are the despair of men. 'If we listen even to a fraction of the goings-on in the family, we will lose our heads', say the men. Others add philosophically, 'God has made mothers-in-law to quarrel with the wives of their sons coming to their homes. We cannot help it. Men will not remain men if they cease quarrelling; we shall all become gods!'

This is indeed a very well-established social pattern. To a mother-in-law, none of the daughters-in-law is perfect, although she may have preference for one over and above the others. From the daughters-in-law's point of view, a mother-in-law would ever remain a mother-in-law: 'Good and bad scorpions, both have the sting; the difference is that the one uses it more often than the other.'

I have already pointed out that the wives of brothers living together occasionally unite against the mother-in-law, but they too have their mutual jealousies and disputes. Husband's sisters, when they are young, are often quite friendly towards their sisters-in-law, but as they grow up they 'get wings' and start indulging in back-biting against them.

The daughter-in-law must maintain sufficient distance from her husband's father and his elder brothers. Unless it is absolutely necessary they should not speak to one another, and when it cannot be helped they must communicate in the minimum of words. Familiarity or intimate talk between them is regarded as highly improper. On the other hand, with the husband's younger

606 brothers the daughter-in-law has terms of privileged familiarity
607 and while they are not expected to cross certain limits, tradition permits them to indulge in joke and banter. Unmarried brothers-in-law provide sympathy and friendship to the harassed wife, but when they grow up they too are drawn to their wives, and the former ties of intimacy are gradually forgotten in the humdrum realities of life.

SIBLINGS

573 Social ideals demand that there should be solidarity between siblings, especially between brothers, and that they should 'love and help' one another. The older brothers and sisters, particularly the latter, must share the responsibility of looking after the younger ones with their mother. In actual practice up to the age of six or seven they are constant companions; later the sisters gradually become absorbed in feminine pursuits and are thus unable to participate as freely in the children's games as they did before, and the boys too develop greater interest in their respective play-groups. Thus, to begin with, the inter-personal relations between the siblings are closest in their early childhood, but later they develop on their own lines, and distance between the sexes increases gradually.

The older siblings can claim some 'authority' over the younger ones. When the mother is otherwise occupied or is ill, the older siblings have to look after and care for the younger brothers and sisters. Particularly the older sisters have to lend a helping hand to the mother, and very often children become so much attached to them that they come to regard them as substitutes for the mother. While siblings of more or less the same age-group have to 'help, support and defend' one another, in their dealings with the other village children, the older ones must keep an eye on the doings of their younger brothers and sisters and bring their faults to
[861] the notice of the parents. The older siblings can occasionally spank the younger ones under their charge, but they must not do it too often. In return for the limited authority which they enjoy, they have to make some concessions. When a younger sibling starts crying for something, it is expected that an older brother or sister should forgo his own share to appease him. 'He is younger; he does not understand it, but you are older and understand everything. Let him have the thing. After all, he is your brother',

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liberty and shield us when parents are angry. We like them and willingly do odd bits of work for them. But others are different. They always have a frown on their faces. At the slightest pretext they are annoyed. We do their work too, but very grudgingly. We make faces behind their backs.' The same applies to aunts. Cousins should be regarded as brothers and sisters, and in a joint family they are certainly treated as such. It naturally follows from this that one should treat one's nephews and nieces as one's own children. While this is found to be rather difficult in actual practice, any favouritism and partiality to one's own children to the exclusion of the brother's children is a fruitful cause of dissension within the family.

RELATIONS OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

Affinal relatives do not maintain close contacts. They meet only on ceremonial and ritual occasions and in such meetings follow the mode of correct behaviour prescribed by tradition. A man will show respect and touch the feet of both his father-in-law and mother-in-law, but his relations with them would always be of a formal nature and would rarely be characterized by intimacy or emotional attachment. Similarly, between the respective parents-in-law of a husband and wife, the relations are rather formal. When they do meet on ceremonial occasions or visit one another, they try to be polite and consciously avoid controversial issues which may cause unpleasantness. If the father of a girl is compelled to intervene on behalf of his daughter who finds life rather difficult in her husband's home, he will exercise considerable tact and refer to the matter in a roundabout way. Amicable settlement is preferred, and all possible efforts are made to avoid a show-down.

Outside the family circle the relations between a person and his or her mother's brother are of special significance. As cross-cousin marriages are preferred in the community, a boy expects to get his wife from his maternal uncle's home, and a girl feels that she may have to go there as a daughter-in-law. With the younger brothers and sisters of his wife a man would have joking relations, and would frequently exercise the privilege of familiarity permitted to him by custom. Other relatives such as maternal grandfather and maternal grandmother are so distant, and contacts with them so rare, that there are no traditional norms regarding them.